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MORAL EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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THOUGHTFUL MEN of every age and country have recognized the fundamental social significance of morality and the vital importance of its practice. Philosophers of ancient nations waxed eloquent on the theme of virtue. Confucius and Mohammed founded religions based largely on moral laws. Indeed, Christianity itself inculcates principles that are chiefly moral in their ultimate scope. Socrates and Plato made all worth while knowledge synonymous with virtue; Aristotle approached our modern conception of morality in declaring knowledge plus activity to be the basis of character; Quintilian, speaking for the Romans, deemed it impossible for any other than a good man to become an orator, i.e., an educated man; Comenius, Locke, Milton, Rousseau, Spencer, Emerson, and Guyau emphasized the supreme importance of morality; profound thinkers of the present age—Hall, Dewey, De Garmo, Snedden, Cubberley, Palmer, Inglis, Kerschensteiner, and hosts of others—are champions of moral worth. Indeed, no leader in thought is bold enough or narrow enough to raise his voice against that which forms the basis of character. Whether morality is thought of as “wisdom” or “harmonious moderation”—the Grecian idea; or as “temperance” or “self-control”—the Roman idea; or as “purity”—the Mediaeval idea, all agree that it is fundamental. The only divergencies of opinion arise over the question of how, when, where, and through what instrumentalities morality should be acquired or taught. The thought of the world regarding the place of morality in the lives of men may be summed up in the words of Emerson: “The true test of civilization is, not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops—no, but the kind of men the country turns out.” Kerschensteiner, a recent German writer, also strikes the keynote of human thought on the subject when he says: “Any training of the intellect deserves attention only so far as it rests on character.”

From the foregoing statements it would seem that, in view of the overwhelming preponderance of learned opinion on the side of the moral virtues, the question of moral education in our schools and other institutions would have been definitely settled long ago. But

such is not the case. While the fundamental nature of the subject is being increasingly recognized, and numerous experiments tried to determine its place in the educational world, the divergencies of opinion indicated above are as pronounced as ever. Commissions of inquiry, both national and international, have made exhaustive investigations, and submitted scholarly recommendations; but no plan or agency has been found that will satisfactorily meet the situation at all points. However, interest is everywhere waxing keener, and movements are being initiated that will, in all probability, lead to an eventual solution of the problem.

Among the efforts recently made to ascertain the exact status of moral education in the schools of various countries, that of an international board of inquiry, with headquarters at London, is notable. This board, composed of scholarly men and women of several nations, sent representatives to the leading countries of Europe, America and Australia, and to Japan. Several of the articles were contributed by educators in the countries visited. The findings of the investigators were recorded by the secretary of the board, M. E. Sadler, in two comprehensive volumes entitled *Moral Instruction and Training Schools*, published in 1908. In order to describe the status of moral education in various nations, and, in doing so, to indicate the practical educational results of philosophic thought extending through the centuries, it will be necessary to summarize the findings of the international board as set forth by Professor Sadler. I shall omit the Australian colonies, as their educational programs seem to offer no contributions of particular relevancy or importance.

A comparative view will involve a consideration of the subject from the following two aspects:

1. Shall the sanctions underlying ethical training be religious, or personal and social?
2. Shall moral instruction be direct and formal or indirect and informal?

(Note: It must be remembered that the following data are for the year 1908.)

ENGLAND

In England the separation of church and state has never been wholly achieved. Most of the schools owe their origin to church influence and naturally their founders instituted ethical teaching with a religious basis. Likewise, the schools that have been established by the Catholics and dissenting Protestant denominations provided for instruction in the tenets of their respective confessions. The growing tendency to bring the schools under state control and support is, of course, diminishing direct church influence; but there is a general conviction among Englishmen that ethical training schools should rest upon religious sanction, though this has now come to be non-sectarian except in the denominational schools.

With reference to the second aspect mentioned, sentiment favors direct religious instruction, with indirect teaching of moral maxims and principles. This indirect instruction is effected incidentally through the regular courses, or through the corporate life of the school and community. In the elementary schools, there is a growing sentiment in favor of direct moral instruction.

GERMANY

The German schools are entirely under state control, but religion is everywhere taught in the public schools, and is considered a necessary basis of all moral instruction and training. It is taught twice a week throughout the nine years of the gymnasial courses, as well as in the elementary schools. This instruction may be received in the schools, under specially trained teachers, or in the home, provided it be supervised and approved by state authorities.

Direct moral instruction is not favored in Germany, the objections being that it is considered too abstract and uninteresting. Hence we find that, aside from the positive moral system implied in catechism, commandments, and Bible texts, no effort is made to inculcate a systematic ethical code. Indeed, the German schools do not make conspicuous efforts even to realize the potential moral value of the regular school subjects, and many observers have charged that German religious instruction in schools conduces more to unbelief than to belief. The Germans attach much importance to physical training, and claim that it has great ethical value. "Religion and country, throne and altar" are the foundations of their educational system, but in practice conspicuous emphasis is placed on patriotism, which means for Germans, love of the Fatherland and loyalty to the Kaiser.

FRANCE

The French brought their public schools entirely

under state control in 1882. They have eliminated from their schools, both elementary and secondary, the participation of the priesthood and of religious orders in the moral education of children, and have even rejected the religious teaching they represent. Consequently, the basis of moral instruction has shifted from religious to personal and civic sanctions.

France has adopted direct instruction, formulated into a definite code, with its principles embodied in numerous text-books. This instruction is emphasized throughout the elementary grades, and extends with less emphasis, through two years of the secondary schools. (Incidental instruction is also achieved through the usual courses.) The result is that moral instruction practically ceases at the age of twelve (the very time it would seem best to begin it in earnest) and entirely stops at the age of fourteen. The French emphasize the intellectual side, and hence moral instruction rather than moral training is the aim; the enlightenment of the intelligence in moral matters rather than the steady formation of habits and character. The children memorize hundreds of résumés of moral lessons, and write numberless compositions on all the virtues, but the active functioning of ethical principles into fixed habits is not achieved; on the contrary, a spirit of skepticism is engendered. Speaking of the French system Rev. Edward Myers, a Catholic writer, says: "The new morality is essentially social; the problem is man's adaptation to his social surroundings—which impose obligations upon him in return for advantages received; the individual conscience is but an echo of the social conscience. Inner morality has disappeared; external circumstances alone—create morality." Another feature that makes moral instruction a practical failure in France is the all-too general scepticism of the teachers.

CANADA

The old provinces of Quebec and Ontario have separate schools for Catholics and for Protestants, each denomination controlling its own religious instruction. Says Sadler: "The public schools must be opened with the Lord's Prayer, except when the teacher chances to have conscientious scruples. Pupils are not required to be present at such exercises if their parents or guardians object. The clergy of any denomination may arrange for giving religious instruction once a week after school hours, to pupils of their own faith; but emblems of denominational character are not to be exhibited during school hours in a public school."

In Manitoba the religious exercises are at the option of the school board. The remaining provinces permit religious exercises in the schoolroom outside regular

school hours, but do not recognize such instruction as a subject of the school program.

Indirect moral instruction is much emphasized in Canada, even though the "systems are as various as the personalities of the principals." Instruction in manners and morals is given by the teachers incidentally from the regular subjects. The following duties are emphasized:

1. Duties to oneself.
2. Duties to teachers and fellow students.
3. Duties to the home.
4. Duties to lower animals.
5. Duties to the people generally.
6. Duties to the country.

Manners include questions of proper conduct at home, at school, on the street and in public places, and at social gatherings. The general success of moral instruction in Canada is vouched for by many witnesses.

JAPAN

Japan has adopted a definite code of morals for her schools, the basis of which is half religious, half civil. It is founded on a religious reverence towards ancestors and towards the Mikado, who is practically synonymous with the state. This code has been developed from the Imperial Rescript issued by the Mikado in 1890. It embraces the following topics:

- Obligations to self.
- Obligations to family.
- Obligations to society.
- Obligations to the state.
- Obligations to humanity.
- Obligations to nature.

Japanese education for twenty-five hundred years has meant, primarily, moral instruction and training. Hence we naturally expect, and find, little divergence of opinion regarding its purpose and nature in Japan. In fact, the chief objection is too much unanimity and too little individuality and personal freedom and responsibility.

UNITED STATES

The international report does not consider moral education in the United States except in the Ethical Culture School of New York and the State Normal School at Hyannis, Mass. In the former, which was established by the New York Society of Ethical Culture, the formation of character is the central dominating motive, consequently we find direct moral instruction for all pupils from the kindergarten up through the high school. The usual reliance is also placed upon the atmosphere and organization of school life, habits of order, industry, respect and courtesy, along with incidental instruction through the ordinary courses. Ethical work through class organizations is particularly emphasized along with the securing of specially trained

teachers and a healthy moral environment. The individual aptitudes and interests of the pupils are considered and great efforts are made, through the best psychological and pedagogical methods, to see that ethical instruction actually functions in moral conduct. The school at Hyannis seeks to develop character through indirect instruction closely resembling that of the ideal home. Great emphasis is placed on the activity of the pupil, the acquisition of moral knowledge being treated as incidental. From the description of moral education in these schools, written by their principals, it would seem that all the problems involved have at last been solved. But the impression is created in the mind of the reader that the results presumably achieved are too ideal to be actual.

Secondary education in the United States, being under the control of the separate states, varies in many details; but there is general agreement that religious instruction should not be given in the schools, and that moral instruction should be incidental. The Gary plan now being advocated in some sections provides for religious instruction outside of school under the supervision of the different denominations. We tried this plan at Tarboro last year, and while the data available is too meagre to predicate dogmatic conclusions from the experiment, I gained the distinct impression that the venture did not achieve the results claimed by its advocates. Many pupils were actuated primarily by the desire to escape school duties, and at times they were tardy on returning from their religious instruction classes. No improvement in conduct was apparent.

OTHER COUNTRIES

In Belgium and Denmark religious instruction is a part of the school curricula, but no systematic effort is made to impart a code of morals. The schools of Norway give religious instruction first place on their programs. However, aside from that involved in religious instruction, little effort is made to give systematic moral training. The home is considered the best place for the development of moral power. In the Swiss schools all religious instruction is given by the clergy, but attendance at the religious exercises is not compulsory. Regarding moral education the report says: "Among the Swiss teachers at the present time the interest in the problems of moral education is so absorbing that it may almost be described as hypnotic. This state of mind results from the discovery of the fact that every teacher is supposed to educate his pupils morally and that he thinks he is doing it, while really he is accomplishing extremely little. It has been assumed without reflection that no one need be specially prepared for influencing children morally, though scarcely any part of education requires so much conscious preparation."

(TO BE CONTINUED)